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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- 11. Mideast
- 12. Iran
- 13. New Delhi Bombings
- 14. Libby Affair

Key stories in the media:

Yediot Washington correspondent Orly Azolai reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has decided to move up the date of her visit to Israel and the PA to November as part of U.S. efforts to prevent escalation in the region following the recent bombings. The newspaper reported that Secretary Rice told Abbas in a phone conversation following the Hadera bombing that the U.S. would help him if he acted against terror. Yediot reported that Abbas told Rice that he finds it hard to put an end to terrorist attacks emanating from Damascus and Tehran.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that Vice Premier Shimon Peres and FM Silvan Shalom reiterated Saturday that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas remained a partner for Israel, only a few days after Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz was quoted as telling Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Israel has no one to talk to on the Palestinian side. The media later cited PM Sharon's reservation about Mofaz's comments.

Yediot cited a "secret" document drafted by the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Planning Bureau, which says that the establishment of a Palestinian state is a strategic interest of Israel, because it would cancel out the asymmetrical component in the conflict, which grants an edge to the Palestinian side.

Leading media reported that three Palestinians were killed on Sunday in a shootout with IDF troops in the West Bank town of Qabatiyah. The media reported that one of the men killed was Jihad Awidat, the Islamic Jihad operative who dispatched the suicide bomber Hassan Abu Zaid to Hadera. Leading media reported that during the weekend, the IAF struck Gaza Strip areas where Qassam rocket fire has originated. Leading media reported that early this month, the Shin Bet and police arrested three Gaza residents -- "Qassam rocket engineers" -- who were dispatched to the Jenin area, where they were supposed to set up a weapons-manufacturing infrastructure. The senior members of the Popular Resistance Committees were caught in the Negev after crossing the border from Egypt.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel welcomed a statement issued by the Quartet on Friday calling on Syria to close the offices of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Damascus. On Sunday, major media cited Syria's denial that Islamic Jihad still maintains its headquarters in the Syrian capital.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that Quartet special envoy James Wolfensohn wrote the foreign ministers of the Quartet on October 16 that Israel has asked the World Bank and USAID to stop a study aimed at determining how to create a transportation link between the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The newspaper wrote that Wolfensohn noted in his letter that he called for the study to continue. Ha'aretz reported that the Prime Minister's Office told the newspaper over the weekend that no official Israeli representative had made such a request.

All media reported that the government currently lacks a majority in the Knesset for the approval of the appointment of three Likud ministers (Ehud Olmert as finance minister, Roni Bar-Lev as industry, trade, and employment minister, and Zeev Boim as immigrant absorption minister) to the cabinet. The media note that one-third of the Likud faction, including Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin and Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu, will refuse to support the appointments. Israel Radio quoted Labor Party whip Knesset Member Ephraim Sneh as saying that his party's partnership in the government coalition will end in a few weeks.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that the IDF has been constructing a major new checkpoint south of Nablus, at the Zaatara (Tapuah) junction, to check Palestinian cars arriving from the northern and western parts of the West Bank.

On Sunday, leading media reported that on Friday, the UN Security Council condemned Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's call to "wipe Israel off the map" and called on Iran not to use threatening language against Israel. The media reported that Iran subsequently issued a statement saying it had no intention of attacking Israel and said it was obliged to adhere to the rules of the UN. Speaking on Israel Radio Sunday, Israel's representative to the UN expressed his hope that following Ahmadinejad's remarks, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan would reconsider his planned visit to Iran. On Sunday, Yediot reported that the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution calling on UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to act to put an end to the defamation of Israel in the world body.

Ha'aretz printed an AP story, which said that Jordan has banned broadcast of a controversial miniseries criticized as being anti-Semitic, thus winning praise on Sunday from Israel and the Washington-based media watchdog Coalition Against Terrorist Media.

On Sunday, Yediot reported that the U.S. has authorized a deal providing for an Israeli sale of dozens of F-16 jet fighters to Romania. Israeli companies will overhaul the aircraft ahead of the sale.

On Sunday, all media (Ha'aretz's lead story) reported on Saturday's bombings in New Delhi, in which dozens of people were killed.

On Sunday, Carmi Gillon, head of the Shin Bet at the time of the late Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir should have been physically eliminated. Gillon made the remarks in the wake of a poll published in Yediot during the weekend, which showed that every fifth Israeli favors a pardon for Amir. Israel Radio quoted President Moshe Katsav as saying today that Amir would not be pardoned, nor his jail conditions alleviated.

Jerusalem Post front-paged the first comprehensive poll conducted in the U.S. since Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank, which found that more than three quarters of those surveyed said they supported the Israeli move. The survey, the results of which were made public by The Israel Project, a nonpartisan organization started three years ago to improve Israel's image in the international media, also revealed growing approval of Israel's security barrier and a more favorable overall impression of Israel among the American public. Two American polling firms were hired to execute the bipartisan study, one aligned with the Democratic Party and the other with the Republicans.

On Sunday, Maariv published the results of a TNS/Telesker Polling Institute survey, which found that for the first time more Israelis demonstrated a positive attitude (33 percent) vis-a-vis the UN, while 29 percent demonstrated a negative attitude.

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Positive Israeli action would help to strengthen moderate Palestinians, because it would make it clear that the disengagement from Gaza was not the end, but the beginning."

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Let us hope that ... decency and fairness will replace the automatic capitulation to the Arab lobby in the UN corridors."

Block Quotes:

I. "Act First, Talk Later"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 31): "The almost-automatic tendency throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to repeat the phrase 'there is no one to talk to' evidently does not characterize the current Israeli leadership alone. George Bush agreed too easily to postpone the establishment of a Palestinian state to an unspecified time, and the Palestinians -- who know that they cannot achieve a full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines -- are not enthusiastic about discussing anything less. But in order to keep the withdrawal from Gaza from becoming the start of a blood-soaked disappointment, it is nevertheless worth trying to inject a renewed spirit of optimism rather than making do with statements such as that made by Shaul Mofaz over the weekend: '[Palestinian Authority Chairman] Abu Mazen is a one-man show; there is nothing behind him. There is only a vacuum'.... The Palestinian Authority might be too weak to fulfill its obligations under the road map plan, but Israel is strong enough to take steps that will serve the interests of both sides on the way to a division into two states.... Positive Israeli action would help to strengthen moderate Palestinians, because it would make it clear that the disengagement from Gaza was not the end, but the beginning."

II. "Our UN"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (October 31): "This is a new era in relations between Israel and the United Nations. The sovereign State of Israel, the Jewish people's state, was given its birth certificate from the UN, and it can be said, and justifiably so, that the UN was present at its birth and gave its blessing to it. But the organization's attitude towards Israel has always been as if to an unusual and unwanted creature. Only in the past year, after decades of hostility and animosity, is a real improvement emerging in Israel's standing in the UN. This improvement has many causes: Israel's policy, a rise in the level of awareness for the dangers of anti-Semitism, the international mobilization against terror, and the vigorous activity of Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and the entire Israeli Foreign Ministry. Let us hope that the improvement will persist and that decency and fairness will replace the automatic capitulation to the Arab lobby in the UN corridors."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Why doesn't Iran fear sanctions?.... Now the Americans fear Iran's political takeover of Iraq."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "We hope, not just for our own sake but for the world's, that Iran's contempt for [the UN] charter and the nations meant to implement it are misplaced."

Block Quotes:

I. "Hellfire Versus Interests"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (October 30): "With

so many states capable of applying pressure on Iran, why can Ahmadinejad continue to mouth off? In other words, why doesn't Iran fear sanctions?.... The answer is: the countries capable of exerting pressure are also concerned about harming their economic relations with Iran. Russia earned about USD 1 billion from its nuclear reactor project in Bushehr; China needs Iranian oil very much; Japan is dependent on Iran; businessmen from Germany, France, Italy and Spain are profiting handsomely from the sanctions the United States imposed on Iran; and now the Americans fear Iran's political takeover of Iraq -- all of these factors explain why everyone tiptoes around the Iranian leadership. And when this is the feeble balance of fear, Ahmadinejad can continue to invoke the fires of hell."

II. "Beyond Condemnation"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (October 30): "It is not every day that all 15 members of the United Nations Security Council rally to Israel's defense. The wider context of the unanimous vote on Friday condemning Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's calls to 'wipe Israel off the map,' however, must be concern that condemnations, in this case, are not enough.... Iran is the quintessential rogue state. As amply evident from Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, his country has motive for malevolence, and will soon have the means and the opportunity to create even more devastation, depending only on its own caprice.... Israel should be pointing out the obvious: that Iran's genocidal call against Israel is not just one country's problem. Iran's support for terrorism, its nuclear ambitions, and its threats against Israel are not isolated concerns. They must be addressed as a package by the community of nations as a whole. This means moving beyond condemnations to doing what the UN charter was designed to do: protect international peace and security by imposing stiff multilateral sanctions against international aggressors. The charter, which the Iranian regime has the gall to wrap itself in, was written to be used in precisely such instances. We hope, not just for our own sake but for the world's, that Iran's contempt for that charter and the nations meant to implement it are misplaced."

13. New Delhi Bombings:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "India is under attack from Muslim extremists -- like Israel -- not for anything it does or did, but for being a largely non-Muslim entity in a part of the world claimed by the Islamists."

Block Quotes:

"India Mourns"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (October 31): "No innocent citizen, whether in a country of 1 billion or in a nation with a mere 6 million souls, should die at the hands of religious or ethnic extremists for being at the wrong place -- a market, a bus, a cafe -- at the wrong time.... We understand that India is a multicultural nation, that 13 percent of its population is Muslim and that both internal harmony and stability in its relations with Pakistan are Indian interests. But 'terrorism' is not the foe -- it is [a] tactic. The larger lesson of this tragedy is that India is under attack from Muslim extremists -- like Israel -- not for anything it does or did, but for being a largely non-Muslim entity in a part of the world claimed by the Islamists.... Beyond expressing sympathy as India mourns its losses, Jerusalem, over the long haul, needs to do a better job at affirming that our two great civilizations have much in common."

14. Libby Affair:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Lewis Libby ... also has very close links with Jewish and Israeli circles and institutions."

Block Quotes:

"Our Libby"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (October 31): "Special American Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, who was appointed to probe the leak of the identity of CIA agent Valerie Plame, announced during the weekend the indictment of Lewis Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff. Who is Lewis Libby? Until his resignation on Friday, Libby was one of the Bush administration's strongest members.... But Lewis Libby, who attends services at Temple Rodef Shalom in northern Virginia, also has very close links with Jewish and Israeli circles and institutions.... Libby's trial will arouse a huge political scandal in the U.S. It will focus on senior pro-Israel officials, who are associated with Israel and the majority of whom are Jewish. The affair, which is connected to fighting and denigrations between supporters and opponents of the war in Iraq, could turn up at Israel's feet. This is the last thing Israel needs."

JONES